

1.           A preformer for use in an extrusion system including a roller having an outer circumferential surface and an extruder head having a discharge outlet, said preformer comprising:
  - a flow inlet configured to receive a flow of material from the
  - 5   discharge outlet of the extruder head;
  - a flow outlet configured to form an extruded component on the outer circumferential surface of the roller from the flow of material received at said flow inlet;
  - a laterally expanding flow channel extending from said flow inlet to
  - 10   said flow outlet; and
  - a flow restrictor disposed within said flow channel and having a length extending substantially from said flow inlet to said flow outlet.
2.           The preformer of claim 1 wherein said flow restrictor has a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow restrictor from said flow inlet to said flow outlet.
3.           The preformer of claim 1 wherein said flow restrictor has a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow restrictor.
4.           The preformer of claim 1 further comprising a die plate configured to partially occlude said flow outlet to thereby profile the extruded component formed on the outer circumferential surface of the roller.

5. A preformer for use in an extrusion system including a roller having an outer circumferential surface and an extruder head having a discharge outlet, said preformer comprising:

- a flow inlet configured to receive a flow of material from the
- 5 discharge outlet of the extruder head;
- a flow outlet configured to form an extruded component on the outer circumferential surface of the roller from the flow of material received at said flow inlet;
- a laterally expanding flow channel extending from said flow inlet to
- 10 said flow outlet; and
- a flow restrictor disposed within said flow channel and extending to said flow outlet, said flow restrictor being configured to narrow a height of said flow outlet proximate a general central portion thereof.

6. The preformer of claim 5 wherein said flow restrictor has a length extending substantially from said flow inlet to said flow outlet.

7. The preformer of claim 5 wherein said flow restrictor has a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow restrictor from said flow inlet to said flow outlet.

8. The preformer of claim 5 wherein said flow restrictor has a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow restrictor.

9.           The preformer of claim 5 further comprising a die plate configured to partially occlude said flow outlet to thereby profile the extruded component formed on the outer circumferential surface of the roller.

10.           A preformer for use in an extrusion system including a roller having an outer circumferential surface and an extruder head having a discharge outlet, said preformer comprising:
- 5               a flow inlet configured to receive a flow of material from the discharge outlet of the extruder head;
- a flow outlet configured to form an extruded component on the outer circumferential surface of the roller from the flow of material received at said flow inlet;
- a laterally expanding flow channel extending from said flow inlet to
- 10           said flow outlet; and
- a flow restrictor disposed within said flow channel and having a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow restrictor from said flow inlet to said flow outlet.
11.           The preformer of claim 10 wherein said flow restrictor has a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow restrictor.
12.           The preformer of claim 10 further comprising a die plate configured to partially occlude said flow outlet to thereby profile the extruded component formed on the outer circumferential surface of the roller.

13.           An extrusion system, comprising:
- a roller having an outer circumferential surface;
- an extruder head having a discharge outlet;
- a preformer operatively connected to said extruder head and
- 5   disposed proximate said roller, said preformer having a flow inlet for receiving a  
flow of material from said discharge outlet of said extruder head, a flow outlet  
defined by said outer circumferential surface of said roller and an elongated  
face of said preformer, and a laterally expanding flow channel extending from  
said flow inlet to said flow outlet of said preformer to form an extruded
- 10   component on said outer circumferential surface of said roller having a lateral  
width which is greater than the lateral width of said discharge outlet of said  
extruder head; and
- a flow restrictor disposed within said flow channel and having a  
length extending substantially from said flow inlet to said flow outlet of said
- 15   preformer.
14.           The extrusion system of claim 13 wherein said flow restrictor has  
a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow  
restrictor from proximate said flow inlet to said flow outlet.
15.           The extrusion system of claim 13 wherein said flow restrictor has  
a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow  
restrictor.

16. The extrusion system of claim 13 further comprising a die plate operatively connected to said preformer and configured to partially occlude said flow outlet of said preformer to thereby profile the extruded component formed on said outer circumferential surface of said roller.

17. An extrusion system, comprising:
- a roller having an outer circumferential surface;
  - an extruder head having a discharge outlet;
  - a preformer operatively connected to said extruder head and
- 5 disposed proximate said roller, said preformer having a flow inlet for receiving a flow of material from said discharge outlet of said extruder head, a flow outlet defined by said outer circumferential surface of said roller and an elongated face of said preformer, and a laterally expanding flow channel extending from said flow inlet to said flow outlet of said preformer to form an extruded
- 10 component on said outer circumferential surface of said roller having a lateral width which is greater than the lateral width of said discharge outlet of said extruder head; and
- a flow restrictor disposed in said flow channel and extending to said flow outlet of said preformer, said flow restrictor being configured to narrow
- 15 a height of said flow outlet of said preformer proximate a general central portion thereof.
18. The extrusion system of claim 17 wherein said flow restrictor has a length extending substantially from said flow inlet to said flow outlet of said preformer.
19. The extrusion system of claim 17 wherein said flow restrictor has a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow restrictor from proximate said flow inlet to said flow outlet.

20. The extrusion system of claim 17 wherein said flow restrictor has a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow restrictor.

21. The extrusion system of claim 17 further comprising a die plate operatively connected to said preformer and configured to partially occlude said flow outlet of said preformer to thereby profile the extruded component formed on said outer circumferential surface of said roller.



22. An extrusion system, comprising:
- a roller having an outer circumferential surface;
  - an extruder head having a discharge outlet;
  - a preformer operatively connected to said extruder head and
- 5 disposed proximate said roller, said preformer having a flow inlet for receiving a flow of material from said discharge outlet of said extruder head, a flow outlet defined by said outer circumferential surface of said roller and an elongated face of said preformer, and a laterally expanding flow channel extending from
- 10 said flow inlet to said flow outlet of said preformer to form an extruded component on said outer circumferential surface of said roller having a lateral width which is greater than the lateral width of said discharge outlet of said extruder head; and
- a flow restrictor disposed in said flow channel and having a height within said flow channel which increases along the length of said flow restrictor
- 15 from proximate said flow inlet to said flow outlet.
23. The extrusion system of claim 22 wherein said flow restrictor has a lateral width which is generally constant along the length of said flow restrictor.
24. The extrusion system of claim 22 further comprising a die plate operatively connected to said preformer and configured to partially occlude said flow outlet of said preformer to thereby profile the extruded component formed on said outer circumferential surface of said roller.

25. A method of extruding a flow of material through a laterally expanding flow channel having a flow inlet and a flow outlet, comprising:

extruding a flow of material through the laterally expanding flow channel to laterally expand the flow of material;

5 narrowing a height of the flow channel proximate a general central portion thereof along its substantial entire length between the flow inlet and the flow outlet to thereby narrow a thickness of the laterally expanded flow of material proximate a general central portion thereof; and

10 extruding the laterally expanded flow of material from the flow outlet.

26. A product made by the method of claim 25.

27. A method of extruding a flow of material through a laterally expanding flow channel having a flow inlet and a flow outlet, comprising:

extruding a flow of material through the laterally expanding flow channel to laterally expand the flow of material;

5 narrowing a thickness of the laterally expanded flow of material proximate a general central portion thereof along the substantial entire length of the flow channel; and

extruding the laterally expanded flow of material from the flow outlet.

28. A product made by the method of claim 27.

29. A method of extruding a flow of material through a laterally expanding flow channel having a flow inlet and a flow outlet, comprising:

extruding a flow material through the laterally expanding flow channel to laterally expand the flow of material;

5 urging the flow of material toward opposite lateral extremities of the flow channel; and

extruding the laterally expanded flow of material from the flow outlet.

30. A product made by the method of claim 29.